

THE
LIFE SCENES OF JOSEPH:
A LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE
BETHESDA BAPTIST CHAPEL,
HAVERFORDWEST,

BY MR. JOHN LEWIS,

(Manager of the Pembrokeshire Bank),

TO THE
SUNDAY SCHOOL CHILDREN,

ON THE OCCASION OF

The Anniversary Services.



"Can we find such a one as this is, a Man in whom the Spirit of God is?"

Gen. XLI., 38.



PRICE TWOPENCE.

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The Life Scenes of Joseph.



Mr. JOHN LEWIS having been solicited by several Friends immediately connected with the Bethesda Baptist Sunday Schools to assist them at their Anniversary Services, very kindly consented to lecture for the especial instruction of the children, choosing as the subject of his remarks the above interesting Bible History.

The Lecture was delivered on Sunday Afternoon, January 31st, 1869. It is as follows:—

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,—

The Address will comprise Four Scenes, and after each Scene the Children will sing one of their Anniversary Hymns.

The Motto of the Address you will find recorded in Genesis XLI. ch., 38 v.

“Can we find such a one as this is, a Man in whom the Spirit of God is?”

We have selected this subject, preferring to give you a life portait to mere abstract truth—to present before you a living person influenced by great principles—rather than indulge in a theological proposition. All that we are going to aim at, is to tell the story and deduce from it such practical lessons as may be likely to influence for good the children assembled—that they may recognise the divine in the human, the truth of God in the holiness of a life, and Heaven reflected through human medium.

FIRST SCENE.

The first scene opens in the tents of Jacob, scattered on the plains and hill sides of Padan-Aram, which skirts the north and north-eastern parts of Mesopo;

tamia Proper, where Joseph's father fed the flocks of Laban the Syrian. We will not dwell upon the beauties of pastoral life, or indulge in the pastoral poetry of classical antiquity. Suffice it to say, that amid the calm quietude of nature, where the cattle browsed and the birds carolled, Joseph first lisped the name of Jehovah. Here he

“Saw the shining dew-drops,
On the flowers strewed,
Proving, as they sparkled,
‘God is ever Good.’”

Here he

“Heard the mountain streamlet
In the solitude,
With its ripple singing
‘God is always good.’”

These were the impressions of his infancy, and “Jehovah,” the God of Israel, the prattlings of his earliest childhood. We accompany him on his first memorable journey from Padan-Aram to Canaan, a distance of 400 miles. We find our youthful traveller seated high up on the back of a camel, gazing in wonder on the wild and varied scenery through which he passed—mountain and valley, rugged rocks and fertile plains, barren wastes and woody glens; here the broad river, there the rippling brook, singing in its progress towards its ocean home. All this impressed his mind, and the book of nature was to him his first lesson-book, wherein he could read the “Wonderful works of God.” But that journey had other lessons than those of nature; there were many incidents that moved his heart and trained his moral nature: they are familiar to you, but permit a reference to a few only. The caravan halted on Mount Gilead, and here Jacob and his family pitched their tents; they were followed by Laban the Syrian, but Joseph was too young yet to understand what his father Jacob and Laban disputed about—he knew, however, that they gathered a large quantity of stones, and piled them up. It was a pillar of a covenant; and there on the mountain top the family assembled to offer sacrifice, and to worship God. The night was spent in devotion—the morning dawned, and Laban bade them all farewell—kissed them all, and returned home—all this did not fail to impress the boy Joseph. The journey was continued, and suddenly the angels of God met them (Gen. 32 chap. 1 v). Joseph was startled, and his father exclaimed “‘This is God’s host,” and he called the name of that place Mahanaim. Joseph always

remembered this—it was a landmark in his history ; it painted his young heaven with angelic glory, it gave him a glimpse of the beauties unseen. From this place Jacob sent his servants to the land of Seir. Joseph now for the first time heard that his father and his uncle Esau had quarrelled many many years ago, when they were boys together ; and when the servants came back, he heard that his uncle was coming to meet them with 400 men. His father became greatly afraid, and that night at the family altar the father prayed, “ O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee ; deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau : for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.” Little Joseph was afraid to meet his uncle, especially that night ; his father sent several servants with cattle as presents to his uncle Esau ; then at midnight he came to the tent, took Joseph and his mother away, and passed over the ford Jabbok, and there left them. The father was not with them that night, he was gone away somewhere, but in the morning he came and was very lame. Ah ! it was a memorable night ! He had wrestled with some man until the breaking of the day, and in wrestling his thigh was put out of joint,—he wrestled with God and prevailed, and God blessed him ; and he was henceforth called Israel, for as a prince he had power with God and with man. While halting on his thigh, and talking of that wonderful night, he looked and saw a banditti come armed with bows and with arrows, headed by a shaggy red-haired chieftain ; it was the bold and chivalrous Esau—coming with 400 men. He divided his family, and little Joseph and his mother were put behind all the rest, fearing Esau would smite them ; but instead of doing so, he ran to meet Jacob and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and the two brothers wept. The family went up in their order, and last of all Joseph and his mother came and bowed themselves to uncle Esau. It was a happy meeting—years had passed away—their quarrels were now forgotten, and there they stood as living brothers, the children of the one father. Joseph could never forget this ; and moral lessons were taught him in rapid succession by the circumstances around him. They travelled on to Shalem ; they

were now in the land of Canaan. He felt a sacred thrill of delight as he trod on the land of his fathers, the land where Abraham had sojourned, and where Isaac dwelt. Here his father spread his tent, and erected an altar, and called it El-elohe-Israel, or God the God of Israel. But we cannot dwell here. You remember what took place: a great provocation had been given to Jacob and his family, and the elder brothers, Smeon and Levi, took their swords and killed all the men of the city. No boy could forget this, and Joseph did not. They hastened from the place, glad to be gone from such a scene of carnage—they hastened to Bethel. Joseph had here an opportunity of distinguishing between the worship of the true God and idolatry. Israel commanded his household to put away the strange gods that were among them, and to be clean and change their garments; for they had their household gods which they had carried away from the house of Laban the Syrian, and others; probably the idols of the Shechemites taken amid the plunder which followed the massacre; they gave, however, to Israel all the strange gods which were with them, and all their earrings, and he very properly buried them under the oak by Shechem. Just the place for idols to be buried; and little girls would do well not to make idols of their earrings, their crosses, and their bracelets, but put them aside—bury them and appear neat and simple and beautiful, as God intended them to appear. Joseph witnessed in the burial of these household gods the folly, the wickedness, and the madness of idolatry; and in the erection of altars, and in the offering of sacrifices, the dignity of God's worship. We hasten on to Ephrath or Bethlehem. On the way an event occurred which Joseph ever remembered, and could never forget, the death of his mother Rachel and the birth of his brother Benjamin, and in a wild solitary spot, where no palms or cypresses give their shelter from the blast, rest the ashes of the beautiful Rachel, the mother of Joseph. No boy can forget his mother—her kind words, her gentle looks, her loving deeds entwine themselves around our hearts' affections; and the remembrance of a sainted mother shields us from wrong, and nerves the soul to deeds of daring. Joseph never forgot his mother. Our last stage in the journey is now reached, and we abide in Mamre, and we make our home with Isaac the grandfather. Poor Isaac—now old and

blind, his long hair, white with the snows of well nigh 180 winters—what an interesting old patriarch ! We have indulged in a rapid survey of Joseph's early history in the tents of Padan-Aram, and to some of the incidents of his memorable journey to Canaan—the events which clustered around him, and nature in her wild glory, formed the substratum of his education. Varied circumstances developed his early powers—angelic visitations, the rearing of altars, the offering of sacrifices, impressed his young heart, and laid the foundation of his religious character. We now come to his *home training*. We are ready to ask who were his teachers ? what was he taught ? and how did he progress ? He was educated at home—taught by his father and his blind grandfather—and taught by these patriarch teachers, he took the highest prize. The old grandfather would take the boy between his knees, and after hearing all he had to say about Padan-Aram, and all the tales of his long journey, would begin to tell the young traveller all that he had seen and known and felt during 180 years—and what a rich storehouse of learning!—what a body of divinity !! We can imagine the lessons as the mind sweeps back and recalls the history of Abraham. What a panorama moves before us ! What unfoldings of God's wise but mysterious Providence. The old man would talk of his father Abraham, and the golden dawn of the Patriarchal age. While the boy Joseph would listen, eager to know more and yet more ; and what gave zest to all, was that in Mamre, many of the events had taken place. It was here the Lord appeared to him as he sat at the tent door in the heat of the day ; and it was here that the three angels conversed with him on their way to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah ; the very place was rich in patriarchal associations, and suggestive of deep religious thought. How his young heart would melt while he listened to the story of little Ishmael and his mother. Then would the old teacher talk of that memorable day when he was taken to Mount Moriah. It was a grand spectacle ! In the spirit of mighty faith the patriarch prophet went forth at the bidding of God to offer his son. The trial was keen and sharp ; but he murmured not ; and that self-same Isaac now instructing the boy Joseph ; yielded himself voluntarily to be bound and laid on the altar, to be sacrificed ; not shrinking even from the upraised

knife! And why? because God commanded it. Think you, that such instruction did not sink deep down into Joseph's heart. Jacob joined the blind old patriarch in instructing the boy, and he too brings forward his vast experience, and tells the tale of his life—abounding with incidents and full of lights and shadows. We see throughout the whole of the training, the past unrolled before him. We must, however, leave the many scenes of Jacob's life, which are familiar to you; we should love to linger over them—to realise his day dreams, and to witness his night visions. We should like to accompany the exiled patriarch through the wild deserts, and tarry with him at Bethel; and there rest our weary heads on the stony pillow, curtained by the wide and open sky; to gaze upon that wondrous staircase where the messengers of God ascended and descended—and to hear the Divine voice, amid the suddenly hushed silence, proclaiming, "I am the Lord God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac;" and to feel with him that the Lord is in this place; and to hear the promises of God, which are yea, and amen. We here see the retiring Isaac, and the persevering Jacob, joint teachers of the boy Joseph, and both telling the tale of Abraham's life, who was distinguished for his bold enterprise, and his commanding faith in God. Jacob had his faults, but we would cast the mantle of charity around him; he had his domestic sorrows; he had the family discord; envy, and hatred, and jealousy shaded the home scene, and well would it be for us to learn from him the lesson never to feel or show partiality to our children. He loved Joseph; he was the child of his old age; the venerable patriarch loved to talk to the child of his beloved Rachel; and his merry laugh was music to a father's heart; and, like all boys destined to greatness, there was about him a gentleness that was most winning; he had a consciousness within of an undefined future that tinged his boyhood, and with child-like simplicity would he relate his dreams, which were so full of prophetic meaning. Such a boy—sitting at the feet of the patriarchs, in daily converse with the world's great heroes—was not fitted for the sheep run; there was stamped on his character a destiny yet unrevealed—a future greatness which youth foreshadowed; that training would certainly one day result in a life distinguished for noble deeds; the seed had been sown, and a harvest

would assuredly be gathered. But wait! old winter, robed with snows and armed with storms, must first pass; spring, with her bright smiles and sweet melodies, must come and go; summer must weave her rich garlands, and the mountain rivulet must gurgle its song, and the corn fields wave their glory; then the "harvest home." So with all great characters—storms and tempests precede the calm; the shout of battle before the hour of victory; the cross first, and then the crown, brilliant with the gems of immortality; Joseph must first wield the sword before he swayed the sceptre. Jacob had now become an old man—his years glided away in peace, and Joseph, attired in his coat of many colours would oft be with him—ever ready to do his behests; he was told to go and see whether it was well with his brethren; blythe and gay he bounded away, while the father smiled approvingly proud of his favourite boy. He went, but never returned; the brothers come bringing with them a torn and tattered garment, clotted with blood; the old patriarch knew it; rending his clothes he cried "it is Joseph's. I will go into the grave unto my son, mourning;" the father's heart was riven, and the remembrance of his boy, made him droop with sorrow.

[This being the close of the First Scene, Mr Lewis requested the children to sing the beautiful little hymn quoted above, entitled "God is ever good." It was sung with great taste and with marked effect.]

S E C O N D S C E N E .

The scene opens on the hill sides of Dothan. A youth is seen wandering alone in a field; he enquires of a stranger the whereabouts of certain shepherds, and he is directed to the hills, and when he was yet afar off, the shepherds saw him and conspired against him, and said one to another "Behold! the dreamer cometh; come let us slay him." Joseph went to his brethren with every confidence, and made the usual salutations of kindly feeling but instead of a kind feeling being returned, they clenched the fist, seized him, stripped him of his coat, and carried him away. He wept, and entreated them as brothers; but the appeal was in vain. He agonised with them, but they saw the anguish of his soul, and they laughed him to scorn. Again he implores, but they turn the deaf ear. Convulsively he grasps them beseeching with tears that his life might be

spared, but ruthlessly they consign him to the pit; they hear his cry of distress, but are unmoved; they listen to his pitiful accents, but they care not. Revenge they felt to be sweet, and jealousy was satisfied; and they sat down to eat bread while they exultingly said: "We shall now see what will become of his dreams." But man's extremity is always God's opportunity. The Medianite merchantmen just then passed by on their way to Egypt, and Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver. Sold to become a slave, and sold to slavery by his own brothers. We sometimes muse over the scene and wonder what his feelings could be—the thought of home gave him many a pang. Never again to gaze on the face of the father who had loved him so tenderly. Never again to take his little brother Benjamin by the hand to follow after the skipping lambs. Ah! that home had its sweet and pleasant memories, but now it was a picture only of the past. The future, with its terrible possibilities, was before him. One would think he was little fitted for the change. A favourite boy, brought up in luxury—a petted home bird, to face—what?—the stern world of business! Nay, to face life in its *worst* aspect—a life of slavery; to become the property of others: to have no will of his own—no freedom of action: perchance to feel the driver's lash, and to suffer in his own person the sum total of human misery. It was not a very easy matter for a boy not to feel. Feel! he felt in every pore; and the vivid memory of his home, and the recollections of the home scenes, intensified his agony of soul. But the HOME instructions aided him now: the experience of his patriarch teachers, told him with such touching pathos, had awakened in him sentiments of incipient piety, which was now being called forth into forcible action. Hope would mingle with his fears. He had learnt that most difficult of all lessons, "To trust in God and take courage." Joseph was now brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the Ishmaelites. He was a slave, but he had the soul of a prince; he was placed in a position mean enough, where he had to learn by bitter experience to *obey*, as the best possible training for a position of *command*. He graced his occupation; there was around it a moral halo; his fine character dignified his meanest services; his work was worship and his worship work. The vision of Jacob's ladder, which had been so forcibly im-

pressed on his mind, became to him now a realized fact, and in his position of a slave in the house of Potiphar he felt he had got his foot on the first rung of that ladder, and gazing upward, determined to ascend higher and higher still heavenward and Godward. It was a noble ambition! and what was the result. He was promoted, Now mark the promotion from being a poor slave-boy doing menial work, "Potiphar left all that he had in Joseph's hand." Think you that all this was attained in a day, or as some dreamy folk say, "It was good luck." Luck! Joseph worked hard, and worked long. Such a position is not to be gained in a day, or gained by lazy drones, but by workers in the great hive by patient toil, by persevering industry, by determined application. Joseph worked might and main; worked cheerfully, and God blessed him. Joseph did what all young people should do on their first entry into life, he established a character for ability and goodness; and once such a character is formed, success is certain. You cannot keep down such a one, if you attempt it: it will only evoke greater powers, just like a certain flower, when most crushed, will give forth sweeter fragrance. We see this daily, and it is characteristic of true greatness. Haaman—proud and imperious, surrounded by pomp and wealth,—the glitter and magnificence of the Persian Court, ought to have been content. But no, all this availed him nothing, so long as Mordecai the Jew sat at the king's gate. And because this poor humble Porter dared to be a man—dared to act from a conscientious principle—he must be even put to death by this proud, ambitious, detestable Amalekite. But, by *accident*, the King read the Chronicles of State, and there found that his life had been saved, from a foul conspiracy. To-morrow dawned, and the proud Haaman presented himself at court, feeling the profoundest satisfaction, and the more so when he was greeted by the king and asked, "What shall be done to the man whom the King delighteth to honour." And what is it we witness? Mordecai is promoted, and proud Haaman degraded—Mordecai made the First Minister of State, and Haaman becoming a Town Crier, and leading the horse on which Mordecai sat, proclaiming—"Thus shall it be done to the man whom the King delighteth to honour." Mordecai from being a porter, the Prime Minister in Shushan, Haaman, a convicted murderer, doomed to the gallows which he had caused to be set up for the captive Jew. Did we say the King by *accident*

had read the Chronicles of State? It was no *accident*; what seemed *accidental* was God's mysterious providence throwing to the surface the man of *true character*; and Haaman's hatred only hastened and accelerated the honor in store for Mordecai the Jew. Joseph had a character, and though in slavery, and doing menial work, he ascended the mystic ladder of life, until we find him in a position of trust. Just a glance at him as overseer. Joseph was still learning to *rule* by learning to *serve*. It is a fact in life, he can best command who has himself obeyed. It is by passing through the lower practical stages of business that the power is acquired for the higher forms of superintendence. Joseph's ability and character were being developed by the education of events and circumstances were training him for something still better and still nobler. Mark his management. Potiphar was astonished. From the time he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the "Lord blessed the Egyptian house for Joseph's sake;" and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. Here let us pause. Sodom and Gohmorrah would have been saved if ten righteous men were found in them, notwithstanding their wickedness. And there is many a man who would be ruined and in a state of bankruptcy, with character and reputation gone, if it were not for some Joseph in his employ. Yes, the fidelity and diligence and prayers of a servant girl, or a poor slave boy, are the means of blessing many a home! the house is blessed of God for the sake of some Joseph; remove him, and a withering, blighting curse will take the place of prosperity. Let us remember this and learn to appreciate true worth. Joseph had inspired in his master a sentiment of affection; and Potiphar loved him, and well he might. The trust reposed in him was so absolute "That he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he knew not ought that he had save the bread which he did eat." This was a proof of the confidence of the master, and reflects the greatest honour on the servant. Joseph was now comparatively happy, and in a position more in accordance with his tastes, and more suited to his ability. He had greater intercourse with society; his fine talent, his genial humour, his sparkling wit, made him an object of interest. Withal he was grave and dignified; he carried into society the principles of his religion, and never forgot the God of his fathers. But in the midst of all this happiness and prosperity, when all was sunshine without and scarcely a cloud on his young heavens, a change, sudden and unlooked-for, came over the scene. The most beautiful rose has its prickles and while the perfume is most fragrant, the touch is mo^ve

painful. This is a true picture of every-day life. Wealth, like the rose, may be beautiful to contemplate, and yield many comforts, and scatter around us a pleasurable aroma, but it has its prickling thorns, its cankering, worrying, vexatious cares. There is no situation in life exempt from sorrows. Joseph found this true in his position, and he became a subject of the most painful trial. The narrative is so told that while it depicts what is infamously bad, there is nothing to excite the imagination, or leave a stain on the mind. *Duty* demands that we should be faithful and fearless in exposing sin; *taste*, that we should be delicate without being excessively fastidious. The subject has its two-fold aspects, the one as exhibiting the worst possible features in the person of the *tempter*, the other, as showing one of the best and noblest traits of human character in that resolute and manly resistance which trampled alike on appetite and opportunity. Potiphar's wife, young and beautiful, living in luxury and ease—never subjected to a high moral culture, or taught those lessons of womanly dignity which might have saved her from yielding to impure passion, sought the society of Joseph. With a nobility of character, worthy of imitation, he appeals to her from a consideration of his master's confidence. Poor thing, he pitied her. Who can tell, there might have been a time when she would have started back in horror at such a picture of herself; but again and again she sought him, till at length she threw off all restraint, openly declared her purpose, clothing her infamous wish in the plainest language, with shameless and unblushing effrontery; again he appealed from the lower to the higher motive—"How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? No—by God's help—no." He rushed from her presence and sought safety in flight. Now the full swelling tide of revenge. The tenderness felt by her was, when repulsed, maddened to vindictiveness; her fondness was transformed with the quickness of thought into ferocity; her unhallowed passion into intense and terrible and burning hatred, and she determined his ruin by malice, by falsehood, by defamation. Nothing less would satisfy her remorseless revenge than to destroy his character, blast his prospects, and wither his life. Young men, you cannot help seeing in the picture presented that which is pregnant with admonitory lessons. When temptation assails you, resist it to the *death*, and if repeated, *flee* from it, remembering the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe. Joseph is arrested by the guards and hurried away, but breathing the sentiments of the hymn we are about to sing,

The way is dark, my Father ! Cloud upon cloud
 Is gathering thickly o'er my head, and loud
 The thunders roar above me, yet see,
 I stand like one bewildered ! Father, take my hand,
 And thro' the gloom lead safely home,
 Safely home, safely home,
 Lead safely home Thy child !

T H I R D S C E N E .

The scene opens on a dreary, dismal looking prison, and in a damp inner cell, chained to the massive walls, his feet fast in the stocks, is Joseph ; a criminal and yet innocent ; accused of the greatest sin, yet conscious of inherent personal purity. His soul was pierced with burning shafts. "But the Lord was with Joseph." Cast down, he was not destroyed ; persecuted, he was not forsaken. Joseph was now learning a lesson of patience, in whatever state to be content, all he could do was to submit and be cheerful, and he did submit and he was cheerful, and in that old cell he sung in a sweet alto voice,

Prisons cannot spirits tame,
 Or hide up God from me ;
 My Faith and Hope they cannot lame,
 Above them I can be.

There is a bright side even to a prisoner's cell. The consciousness of being innocent and right converts the gloom into the prismatic colouring of Heaven's covenanted rainbow. That cell became a place of lofty fellowship with God, and Joseph, instead of being earth's bondsman, became Heaven's freeman. You cannot chain purity ; you cannot imprison thought—there is always, thank God, a road open between the heart and the Father ; a pathway which nothing external can obstruct. Joseph was happy even in the prison cell. He made no attempt at explanation ; he said nothing to criminate the guilty, or justify himself ; his lips were sealed ; he would not betray even the unworthy one who had caused his incarceration, he was too much of the gentleman for that, and his respect for his Old Master was too great to cause him sorrow, and as for himself, he was content to wait God's time, when he would bring forth His "righteousness as the light, and His judgment as the noon-day." Conduct like this won upon the jailor, and now we find committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners, and what-

soever they did there he was the doer of it, and the jailer looked not to anything that was under his hand. Why? Because the Lord was with Joseph, and that which he did the Lord made it to prosper. The prison was never like it before, the jailer could go and come when he pleased; the prisoners were so different, and so well-behaved; it was perfectly marvellous, and all the work of Joseph. Joseph knew how to rule by love and kindness, by being tender and sympathetic, hence the reformation in the prison. Kindness begets kindness; love, like a drop of crystal water, will be attracted by its own kindred nature. Joseph ruled in love; sympathy was one of the secrets of his power, and when intelligence is united with love, and the pulsations of the heart are blended with mental attainments, great victories are ever achieved. Joseph was good as well as clever, and his great character sprang out of his early training, and was nurtured by communion and fellowship with God. Keep down such a one if you can; crush him, he will rise again; sell him to slavery, his force of character will command respect; accuse him of crime, he will remain silent; load him with fetters, chain him to the prison cell, by inevitable law he will become free. You cannot crush God's Heroes. We can well imagine that during the twelve long years that Joseph was the inmate of a jail there were many prison incidents—one only we shall dwell upon. Two of the king's servants were brought to him, and they were placed in ward. Joseph felt peculiarly interested in them, being occupants of the cell where he himself was bound. One day they looked sad and sorrowful; they had had strange dreams which troubled them. We will not enter into the question of prophetic dreams, or discuss the action of the supernatural. Joseph interpreted the dreams, and declared that in three days the Chief Butler should be restored, and the Chief Baker doomed to death, and it was so. We linger over the conversation with the Chief Butler. With child-like simplicity, Joseph asks him, "Think of me when it is well with thee, and shew kindness, for indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon." And when the tidings came that the Chief Butler was recalled to office, according to Joseph's prediction, he shed tears of gratitude; he wrung the hand of his friend and made fair promises. Nevertheless, the butler remembered not Joseph, but forgot him. Such is human friendship, and such the fair promises of the world. You will be thanked for favours to come; past favours are soon forgotten; but learn this lesson, the gratification is in the act of doing kindness, and not

in the gratitude you receive, and no one can deprive you of that inner peace, that holy joy, which doing good will always bring. Be always kind therefore. Joseph remained two more years in prison. Sit down awhile and imagine his thoughts while reviewing the past. It was a long way from the tents at Padan-Aram to that jail—and all that had taken place was very strange and most mysterious—it is no wonder if he should have said, “Well, I don’t deserve all this.” To be sold by his brothers, how unkind; to be accused of crime by one whom he had served so faithfully; to be imprisoned for years in the prime of young manhood, and now doing kindness to the Chief Butler and to be so soon forgotten, and no hope left but to remain perhaps for years more in that dismal prison. Joseph did not brood over such thoughts; he felt within himself that prophetic impulse which belongs to all superior natures, and which obliges the belief that they are destined to rise; that something great is to be done—it is no dream, no fancy—but an irresistible divinity within, and which, in spite of difficulties, will triumph. He needed this training; his great character expanded under difficulties; his soul grew and enlarged, not only in spite of his trials, but because of them; they formed part of his education, and from trial to trial, from scene to scene, through sorrow and change, hope and disappointment, he advanced higher and higher still, until he stands before us an accomplished *Hero*, ready equipped for *Conflict* and for *Conquest*.

[The children here sang from their hymn-books a hymn entitled “Won’t you volunteer.”]

F O U R T H S C E N E.

The last scene opens amid the splendours of a court. In the royal chair sat the King,—his chamber decorated with works of art, the richest tapestry hung gracefully on the palace walls; courtiers, attired in their richly embroidered garments, waited upon him;—but all failed to remove the settled gloom which like a leaden cloud hung around the monarch. His mind was disturbed, his dreams were mysterious and they haunted him; the magicians and the wise men came, but failed to interpret them. The chief butler now remembered Joseph; he was sent for in great haste, and, after changing his prison dress for a more courtly attire, our hero stands for the first time in the halls of the Pharaohs. With humility, and yet with firmness and great dignity, did Joseph appear before the king; and when Pharaoh said I have

heard say of thee thou canst understand a dream to interpret it, Joseph meekly replied—"It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." The dreams were related, and immediately interpreted. Under two different emblems—by the appearance of seven fat and seven lean kine, as also by the like number of good and bad ears of corn, the king had been warned that seven years of plenty would be succeeded by an equal period of famine. Joseph advised the king what to do, and the thing seemed good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and he determined that the very man who had suggested the plan should be fixed upon to carry it into execution. Joseph was immediately invested with the highest dignity and with an unlimited power to transact the affairs of government. He little expected this change; he had grown weary of waiting the fair promises of the butler; two years had passed away since then, and now the butler remembered his faults; but even now he did not seek Joseph's liberty,—he did not serve *Joseph* but the *King*, by suggesting his being sent for as a man of talent and ability, who could interpret dreams. His advancement therefore was not the result of interest or patronage, but of personal qualification. Joseph, from his previous training, was eminently fitted for his new position. Mark Pharaoh's expression in the words of our motto—Can we find such a one as this is; a man in whom the Spirit of God is. He recognised in Joseph Divine gifts as well as human accomplishments. There was no mistake about his position. "Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou." We now behold our *hero* with all the ensigns of royalty itself, adorned with Pharaoh's ring, with vestments of fine linen, and a gold chain, expressive of dignity, and riding in his chariot of state, while they cried before him "Bow the knee." What a change! from the prison to the palace, from the dismal cell to the royal chariot, from being a supposed malefactor to be Egypt's Prime Minister. It is no wonder;—like many others born in obscurity yet born to greatness; the Lord was with him, and therefore he was a prosperous man. Joseph was now 30 years of age, and the prime minister of Egypt, a position which he continued to fill for the space of eighty years. He was now called "Zaphnath Paaneah," a titled personage, the first peer of the realm, and Pharaoh gave him to wife Asenath, daughter of the priest of On; he thus became connected with the nobility of Egypt, and acquired social position in addition to high office. He was doubtless fitted to enjoy domestic life and all that was pure and hallowed in the marriage solemnities;

indeed, we have a glimpse of the home scene, and we are impressed with his great religious character on the domestic hearth. To his children he gave names expressive of his deep gratitude to God. Manasseh, for God hath made me forget all my toil. Ephraim, for God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. His early training tinged his whole life; his communion with God shed a lustre over his every act; his business had around it a divine halo, and he felt as all should feel, that the brilliancy of surrounding circumstances is but a painted bubble unless the central figure is divine and godlike. Never let us forget that our business, however mean, may have Christ as the great central figure; and in it we may feel the impulses of the spiritual, we may receive visions of the heavenly, we may have the aspirations which only Heaven and God can satisfy; and unless our business is this,—unless it subserves the higher destinies of the man, unless it has upon it the image and superscription of Heaven, it is but vanity and vexation of spirit. Let us glance at Joseph as a statesman. His home with all its attractions, and society with all its pleasures, did not deter him from doing that which he believed so important to the interest of the commonwealth. He paid visits of inspection, he went over all the land of Egypt, built stores in the cities and in convenient localities. The plenty came, the earth brought forth by handfulls, Egypt had never before enjoyed such prosperity, everywhere there was joy and gladness and the voice of song, and “Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea.” It needed powers of the highest order to provide for future and remote wants; it was not enough mechanically to store the surplus goods, but to teach a nation in the midst of plenty to be frugal, was no easy matter. To secure corn for consumption seven and fourteen years hence seemed so absurd. Joseph had an herculean task to indoctrinate a nation into his sentiments, and to infuse his great spirit into the people; and doubtless there was the jeering laugh! He, the slave in Potiphar’s house! He, a short time since a prisoner in jail! But his nobility of character silenced all objections; his mighty powers were felt, and his commanding talent acknowledged and respected. Human nature is to-day the same. You will find in passing through life you will have a swarm of buzzing, envious, jealous, little nonentities jeering at you; but never mind, all this is in the path of true greatness; live it down; time will convert their hatred into love, their envy into respect, their jeering into admiration. Learn to go on in the straight path; do right regardless of consequences; be true to *yourselves* and to *God*, and the time will come

when your character will expand into reputation,—a reputation which your very enemies will rear. At length the famine came, distress prevailed, the stalwart man wept by the side of his starving wife and heard the heartbreaking cries of innocent childhood imploring for bread. And when all Egypt was famished and the people cried to Pharaoh, all he could do and say was, “Go to Joseph, and what he saith to you do.” Think you it was an easy task for seven long years to hear the cry of distress, and to witness the burning tear on the wan and dejected face of the starving, and yet provide. Joseph, as a statesman, stands unrivalled; his great talent conceived a comprehensive plan to avert the calamities of famine; he heard the piteous cry of want and was able to convert the lamentations to praise; he saw the feeble tottering footsteps of the starving, and was able to make the cottage homes of a nation vocal with the merry laugh of well-fed childhood. But who are these Hebrew strangers that come? Far away in the land of Canaan the famine was felt, and the patriarch Jacob was forced to seek relief in Egypt. His ten children were sent, and now we see them bowing with lowliest reverence at the feet of Egypt’s Prime Minister. Ah! who can say what were the feelings of Joseph while now, with stern and steady look, he gazed upon his own ten brothers. “Twenty years have passed away since I last saw them, I am altered now and they know me not, invested with the ensigns of majesty they recognise me not as the brother they so cruelly treated and sold; it needs be that they pass through an ordeal to test their character. I must now command myself so as to elicit from them that which I long to know,—is my father yet alive, and are they still what they once were, or are they changed and a comfort to my aged father.” Thus he soliloquised, while with a steady look fixed upon them he said, “Ye are spies, to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.” Now came the family story; the old patriarch was still alive, and Benjamin was left with him in the old house at home. Enough! “Ye shall not go forth hence except your youngest brother come hither; send one of you now and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison that your words may be proved; and they were put together in ward for three days.” Again on the third day they appeared before Joseph, who was attired in the gorgeous vestments of royalty. He looked upon them, and, speaking through an interpreter, he appeared as if he understood them not. It was a wise policy; he decided upon the course to be taken, to retain one only as a hostage, while the others returned home. Now the confession of sin one to another.—“We are verily

guilty concerning our brother, and now his blood is required." They knew not that Joseph understood them,—they knew not it was Joseph; he turned away from them and wept, his heart was melted into tears, but it behoved him thus to act. He commanded Simeon to be bound before their eyes, and having had their sacks filled with corn, he bade them be gone. Was there no tender message sent from Joseph to his aged father; and must the heart of the good old man be still more deeply wounded by the loss of Simeon and the demand made for Benjamin. It was meet that it should be so now; the purposes of God were being accomplished, and in that quiet home in Canaan they told the listening father the tale of the Egyptian lord, and while they were yet speaking the aged patriarch burst forth into passionate grief, and exclaimed, "Me ye have deprived of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Wait; not so, thou troubled Israel. Again they came, and with them Benjamin, and again they appeared before the lord of Egypt. When Joseph saw his brother Benjamin he was overcome; he sought where to weep, and he entered into his chamber and wept there. Yes, it was verily true, the little brother that he had taken by the hand and joined him in youthful frolic was really there; and the aged father was yet alive. But too soon yet to make himself known. He admitted them to eat with him, and while together he paid particular attention to Benjamin. And now Joseph heard all: but another trial was yet necessary. They had not only corn and their money returned, but into Benjamin's sack was put a silver cup. They hastened away homeward, but just outside the city gates they were overtaken and charged with dishonesty, and when the silver cup was discovered, great was their consternation! Again they appeared before Egypt's lord, and Judah pleaded, and with such touching and melting eloquence—"What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak, or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants; behold we are my lord's servants, both we and he also with whom the cup is found. But oh! my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ear, and let not thine anger burn against thy servants. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father or a brother? and we said unto my lord, we have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up

to my father and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come, on my father" He bade every man to retire, save these eleven brothers, then bursting with emotion, he cried, "I am Joseph, and doth my father yet live"? The brethren looked with astonishment; they were mute, they could not answer, for they were troubled in his presence. Joseph fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept too. He kissed all his brethren and wept over them, and after that they sat down and talked together of all the way that the Lord their God had led them. Now the journey home. We refrain from indulging in any thoughts of that memorable journey; but we wonder not that Joseph should have said to them—"See that ye fall not out by the way." The conversation must have been rich and yet painful. The ten brothers must now confess their faults, that they sold their brother because of envy, and were guilty of falsehood to the father who for 20 years had mourned the cruel death of his darling boy, and now behold, he was not dead, but was lord of Egypt! They arrived home, and told the aged patriarch all. Poor Israel swooned away, it was too much for a father's heart; but when he heard all, and saw the waggons which Joseph had sent to carry him down to Egypt, his spirit revived, and he cried—"It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die." The family, 66 in number, left for Egypt, and Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father to Goshen. And what a meeting! Not a word was uttered; their hearts were too full for words. The tottering father and the princely son embraced each other and wept, and wept a good while. By-and-bye the good old man stammered forth, while tears streamed down his withered cheeks, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." Not so, thou honored parent! thou art destined to live yet years, happiness awaits thee, and a glory will yet circle thy patriarch's brow. We close our last scene, leaving much untold, with Joseph and his father in converse with the king, seated in the palace of the Pharaohs.

CONCLUSION.

We have followed our *Hero* from the tents at Padan Aram, on through the chequered scenes and vicissitudes of an eventful life, until at length we sit down with him amid the splendours of the Egyptian Court. We have seen him in the varied relationships of life—the boy at home, the slave in Potiphar's house, the prisoner in the

cell, the prince at court, the brother, the son, the statesman, and we ask in wonder and astonishment, what is the secret of this marvellous life? What? "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man," that is the secret; and without God's blessing there cannot be true prosperity; and with it, everything will work together for good. Difficulties and trials, temptations and calumnies, bonds and imprisonments, will become the successive steps over which we shall ascend to greatness and to glory. My dear children learn from what we have said to be like Joseph, to feel as he felt, to act as he acted, to trust in God as he trusted, then, if prosperity be your lot, you will be *humble*, but if adversity, you will be *brave*. If God be with you, your business will be worship; every place will be God's temple, and every act a psalm of praise. To the teachers present, we would say, be encouraged by the narrative to greater diligence in your work. Early impressions cannot die. The lad at the knees of the blind Isaac, is the same person that afterwards ruled the commonwealth of Egypt; trials gathered thickly around him, but his early training upheld him in the severest conflict; temptations swept over him, but his early lessons had taught him bravery, and armed with strength, he triumphed. He was hurried to the prisoner's cell, but it became a place of lofty fellowship with God; where oft and again he felt the holy consecration of his boyhood. The tide of calumny dashed him away, but, with youthful courage, he battled with the treacherous sea, he trod on the angry billow, and we see him at last on the crest of the wave, shouting one of his early lessons—"The God of Jacob is my refuge." I need not tell you, that the man is reared in the child, the greatness is rock'd in the cradle. Your work is God's work, and it must and will succeed. Courage! down from Heaven the decree comes, laden with brightest visions. My word shall not return to me void, but shall accomplish that which I please." The handful of corn sown in tears and watered with your prayers, shall shake like Lebanon. Already the Hosannas of the children are mingling with the Hallelujahs of the Church, and the Abba Father of lisping childhood are blending with the supplication of the pious seer. Toil on, ye faithful teachers of the Cross. The stripling boy and the timid girl will remember you amid the toils of the future, and bless your memory—you will be gone—but your teaching will live on; your instructions can never die; your hymns will be sung in cottage homes, and the palace will echo the chorus. Toil on, in faith and hope. The children of the present will be the Christian warriors of the future—the gallant defenders of the truth, the holy crusaders of the Cross—and when you

will have joined the redeemed Church, and with your harps attuned to the music of the New Jerusalem, with wonder you will ask, while gazing on a moving host, "Who are these coming up out of the wilderness?" The answering shout will greet your ears—"We are the children of the Sabbath School come out of great tribulation." Then teachers and children will join in the long chorus—

"Unto him that loved us and washed us in his own blood, unto Him be glory and dominion, and power, world without end. And all Heaven will respond even so."—Amen.

